

Technology MEETS Training

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From full simulation rooms to 14-foot projection screens, the Department of Criminal Justice Training is growing to meet the ever-evolving needs of today's police officers.

Two of the agency's training facilities recently expanded to include new options for both skills and classroom training. In the firearms section, a new virtual firing range has been installed that allows recruits and officers the option to work on their basic marksmanship skills before moving into live fire, said Fran Root, then-branch manager of DOCJT's Skills Section.

"One of the biggest values, especially for someone who hasn't dealt with firearms before, is to be able to grasp some of those fundamentals before they get into the loud explosions and recoil," Root said. "This system eliminates those items, plus some of the expense in ammunition. Studies have found that students learn just as well, and I expect new students learn better, from the combination of simulation and live fire."

The virtual firing range replaces the former Fire Arms Training Simulator the agency has employed with countless recruit classes over the years. The FATS machine allowed one to two recruits to participate in scenario-based training, but the new virtual firing range creates 16 firing lanes, Root said. This expansion means that half a recruit class can be involved in simulation training at one time.

"There is downtime especially in handgun training because only half the class can shoot at one time," Root said. "Now half the class can be doing live fire and the other half can be doing simulation. They will get that much more trigger pull and sight picture and those types of things that are so vital."

Additionally, the virtual firing range allows for the use of rifles, OC canisters, Tasers and flashlights in simulation training, something that was unavailable on the former FATS machine,



▲ Justice and Public Safety Cabinet Secretary J. Michael Brown, left, talks with Firearms Section Supervisor Jim Simpson during a presentation about the new virtual firing range.



▼ Members of a recent recruit class used the virtual firing range as part of their firearms skill training. The expansion to a 16-lane simulation firing range allows students to increase their hours of firearms training without increasing ammunition costs.



PHOTO BY JOE WALLACE

Introducing the expansion of technology in DOCJT Facilities

Root said. The system still does allow for playback and coaching following the exercises as well, which Root said is a vital part of the simulation training.

In addition to a variety of pre-recorded scenarios, Root said DOCJT instructors will be able to film their own. In fact, the system can be used to replicate Kentucky-based scenarios — both situations that went right and those that went wrong — for training material.

"We hope to deal with a lot of non-lethal situations, such as a standard disorderly conduct call that has escalated to using force and the student has to work through it," Root added. "The machine has branches depending on how the student is working their way through the scenario, the instructor can change the scenario while the student is dealing with it. If he or she is dealing with it properly, then it doesn't have to go to a deadly force situation."

Across campus, Leadership Development Section Supervisor Steve Howard has worked together with Eastern Kentucky University Information Technology to outfit a Schwendeman building classroom with the latest technology available to students.

A 14-foot screen and a 5,500 lumens Epson high definition projector are just the beginning of what students using the classroom will see. An HD document camera is recessed in the ceiling and shines down onto the computer-equipped podium, enabling an instructor to put a document as small as a business card under the lens that can now easily be seen in the back of the room, Howard said.

"The lecture capture camera in the ceiling has a 180-degree pan tilt zoom," he said. "That's going to be really unique when students do presentations, and we can record them and give it back to the students for them to watch themselves."

There are two 60-inch monitors in the back of the classroom and one 80-inch monitor in the front that also are high definition. An interactive touch-screen white board can be used to access the Internet and draw and move images around the work station, Howard said. Up to four students can connect to its system at once.

The classroom primarily will be used for leadership, legal and instructional design

training, but Howard said as scheduling allows, all DOCJT classes will have access to the technology.

"EKU has told us this is the most high-tech classroom on university properties," Howard said. "They have challenged us that it will always be able to do more than we can imagine. If you can think it, this classroom can already do it. So I have been challenging our instructors, when they go in there, to see how they can use the technology."

The room is designed in two ways, Howard said. It can be used as one total station where the same images, videos or materials are displayed on all of the room's monitors, or instructors can choose to "explode the room," Howard said, which means that each individual monitor can be used as a work station to replace old flip charts for group work.

"The students can log in on their devices and work in their groups on their individual monitors," Howard said. "You can have up to four students on each monitor. With five monitors, we can support 20 students."

Howard also is hoping to add a set of 25 Kindle tablets to the classroom that will eliminate paper and save on material costs.

"We want to start with the Criminal Justice Executive Development course and issue them a Kindle with all their materials on it," Howard said. "[We would provide the Kindle] instead of issuing each student three, three-inch binders of materials and the five books they are required to read for that class. It is a lot of paper saved and \$4,000 each year just on books. We can buy the e-version once and we have it."

This classroom is designed to function as a test study for the possibility of implementing similar technology throughout the agency in the future, Howard said.

"We want to find out what works, what doesn't work, what is a good investment and how we can use this technology in other areas," he said. "I have been going in during orientation and challenging the officers to think of new ways to use this technology. The younger generation of officers has grown up with this tech, and they can teach us. That's the great thing about it."

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▲ Leadership Development Instructor Ed Lingenfelter draws on the new interactive white board to illustrate a point while teaching a class.

▼ Class members view Leadership Development Section Supervisor Steve Howard's PowerPoint presentation on the new 14-foot projection screen.



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON